

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Hedging has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years in relation to linguistics studies. In general, hedging has shown to be an essential element of different genres such as research articles (Hyland, 1998, 1999), advertisements (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001) as well as newspaper opinion articles (Dafouz, 2003, 2008) and editorials (Abdollahzadeh, 2007). Hedging shows the degree of tentativeness, possibility and/or politeness that writers use in their texts. According to Camiciottoli (2003: 9), hedges help writers to present information in a clear, convincing and interesting way to promote acceptance and understanding, as well as reader-writer solidarity. Hedges can act as persuasive devices to affect and influence the reader's reactions to texts according to the values and established rules and conventions of a discourse community.

Considering the significant of hedges, there are a large number of studies have been conducted to investigate this phenomenon in academic and scientific discourse. As evidence, the majority of studies on hedging are found to be concerned with academic writing, particularly with research articles genre across different disciplines and different languages (Salager-Meyer, 1994; Meyer, 1997; Skelton, 1997; Namsaraev, 1997; Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994; 1996; 1998; Vartala, 2001; Lewin, 2005; Vold, 2006; Falahati, 2007;

Martin, 2008; Vasquez & Giner, 2008). Hedging has also been studied in genres even like architecture project descriptions (Cabanes, 2007) and legal discourse (Vass, 2004).

However surprisingly little attention has been given to the newspaper genre, whilst this genre can be considered as “some of the most adequate examples of persuasive writing” (Connor, 1996 cited in Dafouz-Milne, 2008), where writers should be concerned about the choice of appropriate language to convey the information as clearly and accurately as possible, and what is more important to achieve readers’ attention and trust.

Newspaper discourse is probably among the most remarkable genres since it is undeniably one of the most popular public media which has a wide range of audience. According to Fowler (1991), readers gain a large proportion of their knowledge of the world through the media, particularly newspapers. However, the investigation of hedging in news texts has not received much attention. The number of studies, investigating how hedging, among many other strategies aiming to mitigate statements, functions in newspaper discourse is not as numerous as the number of those dealing with academic/scientific discourse. Clemen’s (2002) study on hedging in the British weekly business magazine, *The Economist* to be the first study focusing particularly on hedging in journalism. Although her study was lack of sufficient data, still it gave “an idea of the occurrence of hedges and kindred elements in a genre of economic text that deserves still wider coverage” (Clemen, 2002: 46). Later, in 2008 Buitkene examined the frequency of

occurrence and variety of hedging devices in editorials and news stories from four different newspapers: *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Herald Tribune International*, and *The Independent*. The research revealed that editorials and news stories use different hedging means: moreover editorials are more heavily hedged than news stories.

Fomina (2010) investigated some discourse functions of English hedges in British magazine, *The Guardian*. Noorian and Biria (2010) conducted a cross-cultural study of hedging strategies employed by American and Iranian writers from *The New York Times* and *Tehran Times* respectively. Buitkene (2008) in her study found out that in newspaper discourse hedging means are distributed differently, depending upon the genre of a newspaper article. According to the researcher, “the main function of news stories is to objectively inform the reader, to provide him/her with hard facts, while editorials aim to form or influence, sometimes even to manipulate, public opinion (Buitkene, 2008: 12).

On the whole, the previous studies confirmed the presence of hedging devices in newspaper discourse especially in opinion, editorial and news stories column. Moreover, the results of these studies proved the key role of hedges in newspaper genre and the crucial importance of combining fact and mitigated opinion in newspaper discourse in order to attain effective persuasion”(Dafouz-Milne, 2008:103).

However, it is quite noticeable that there is another important news source in the newspaper which is called “*Room for Debate*” containing opinion

articles from experts covered in the form of written debate. New York Times is one of the newspapers which provide this column. In fact, the study on the use of hedges in “*Room for Debate*” is still limited since not all newspaper provides this column and this requires more studies to be conducted. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the hedging devices used in “*Room for Debate*” posted in New York Times online website. In this study, the writer focuses on the types and frequencies of hedge used in articles from group debate in six topics including business, economy, politic, environment, health, and technology. Further, this study will be conducted to find out the possible functions of hedging devices in “*Room for Debate*” published on New York Times online website.

This study attempts to investigate the types and frequencies of hedges as well as their possible functions in group debate in the hope that the results of this study will provide English practitioners with better idea on the use of hedge in debate about particular topic appropriately and adequately. It is also hoped that the result of the present study will be useful for English for Specific Purpose (ESP) developers, English for Academic Purpose (EAP) developers, translators, teachers and writers in Indonesia.

B. Limitation of the Study

This study attempts to investigate the types and frequencies of hedging devices used in “*Room for Debate*” posted in New York Times online website in the section of politic, economic, business, environment, health and

technology. The articles will be selected randomly during the recent four years (2012-2015). Further, this study is conducted to find out the possible functions of hedging devices in “*Room for Debate*” published on New York Times online website.

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background, this study aims to explore the types and frequencies of hedging devices. Since, the number of studies investigating hedges in the newspaper discourse, particularly, in the “*Room for Debate*” is quite limited, the present study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the forms and frequencies of hedging devices used in “*Room for Debate*” posted on New York Times online website?
2. What are the possible functions of hedging devices in “*Room for Debate*” posted on New York Times online website?

D. Objective of the Study

In accordance with the background and the research questions, the following are the objectives of the study:

1. To describe the forms and frequencies of hedging devices used in “*Room for Debate*” articles posted on New York Times online website.
2. To describe the possible functions of hedging devices in “*Room for Debate*” articles posted on New York Times online website.

E. Benefits of the Study

The benefits of the study are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The result of the study is expected to provide additional information about the forms of hedging devices used in online newspaper.

2. Practical Benefit

- a. The implications of this study will be useful for English for Specific Purpose (ESP) developers, English for Academic Purpose (EAP) developers to teach hedges in writing and reading comprehension activities about particular topics.
- b. This study can help Indonesia writers and readers to acquire a better knowledge on the use of hedges in newspaper discourses.
- c. This study will be beneficial for providing some pedagogical implications for both English language learners and teachers in terms of the appropriate use of hedges in English debate.

F. Research Paper Organization

This research paper consists of five chapters. It is systematized as is explained bellow:

Chapter I contains introduction which includes the background of the study, the limitation of the problem, the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the benefits of the study, and research paper organization.

Chapter II presents the literature review which is composed of the

previous study, theoretical review, and theoretical framework.

Chapter III provides research method which consists of type of research, object of the research, data, data source, and technique of collecting the data, data validity and technique of analyzing the data.

Chapter IV, as the most important part of this research paper, comprises the research finding and discussion that includes the forms and frequencies of hedging devices and also the possible functions of hedging devices in “*Room for Debate*” articles posted on New York Times online website.

Chapter V is closure as the end of the thesis by giving conclusions and suggestions. For the attachment there are bibliography and appendices.